

**Remarks by Kurt M. Campbell**  
**Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs**  
**Press Availability**  
**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**  
**March 10, 2010**

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** Good afternoon. I have just concluded a very successful discussion with our Malaysian counterparts; part of our mission here in Southeast Asia to continue to the process of strengthening our ties in the region. I'll be visiting a number of states and also proceeding down to Indonesia to take some final steps in anticipation of the President's visit. We think U.S.-Malaysian relations are on the verge of substantial improvement. We have seen steps in the last several months on a range of issues, on trade, cooperation on counter-terrorism, on a variety of other issues and I think both sides now acknowledge that our two countries can take substantial steps in the time ahead to improve our relationship, and I am looking forward very much to helping assist in that process. We have agreed on some specific visits and some engagements, and our Malaysian friends will have more to talk about in that regard in the coming days. I am unfortunately flying off fairly shortly to Laos, but I am happy to take questions, and I'll do my best to get us through as many as possible.

**QUESTION:** My question is on security cooperation. Singapore authorities recently issued an alert saying that a terrorist group was planning an attack on an oil tanker in the Malacca Straits. Could you comment on how the U.S. government views the actions taken by the littoral states to deal with this threat?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** Well first of all, the United States takes an active role in providing support to the littoral states. We think that cooperation is very strong; we think those states are in the lead, and we want to continue to provide as much assistance in this process going forward as possible. We have had conversations in Singapore on these matters in Southeast Asia in recent days.

**QUESTION:** This question is on Myanmar. I am wondering if we could have your comments on the election process, given that the election law has been released. Yesterday the U.S. State Department reaction was quite skeptical.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** We are seeing the rollout of the election process. We have seen the first document of five. I think it would be fair to say that what we have seen so far is disappointing and regrettable, and we'd like to see steps taken by the government to encourage a domestic dialogue in anticipation of and in advance of the elections. Obviously we are going to see more as this develops, but that is our initial take.

**QUESTION:** There is a new law apparently that bars Aung San Suu Kyi will be barred from participation in elections...(inaudible).

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** I would like to stick with the same statement I just gave... We want her to play an active role in the political life of the country going forward, and

we stand by our continuing statements about having her be released and being allowed to play an active and full role inside the country. But, as I suggested, we are disappointed by what we have seen so far.

**QUESTION:** Vietnam will be taking over the ASEAN leadership... may I know what is the United States stand on the South China Sea issue. Will the U.S. support Vietnamese efforts to negotiate a solution on South China Sea?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** Our position on these issues is longstanding. We have critical interests in terms of freedom of navigation, freedom of the seas. We welcome China's recent commitment to engage again on the Code of Conduct. Our general view is that we think the best process for these issues to be addressed is in a multilateral setting, including ASEAN as a whole.

**QUESTION:** Would you have a "political greeting" for Vietnam as it takes up its ASEAN leadership role?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** First of all, we are very much looking forward to the ASEAN Regional Forum later this year and also to opportunities for the Secretary and others to engage with the leadership. We give best wishes during a critical period where the United States wants very much to engage actively with ASEAN going forward.

**QUESTION:** Several other governments have come forward in support of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, was wondering if you could comment on the U.S. position on this?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** Well first of all, the statement Secretary Clinton made two weeks ago stands for itself. What we are looking for is an impartial application of laws inside Malaysia; Malaysia is a country of laws. Obviously we are watching developments related to this trial very closely.

**QUESTION:** Can you give any updates on the status of a bilateral U.S. Malaysia FTA?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** The current approach is that we are very anxious to begin proceeding with the Trans Pacific Partnership. As you know, we have had discussions in Australia. I think there has been some interest on the part of Malaysia, and we would welcome that interest. We recognize that there is strong desire on the part of the countries of Southeast Asia, and indeed other parts of Asia, for the United States to continue to play a strong confident role in the economic activity of the region as a whole. They look for the United States to continue to take steps in the TPP and elsewhere. We want very much to be able to fulfill that hope going forward.

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